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*GENUINE  
AND  
COUNTERFEIT*

EXPERIENCES OF A CONNOISSEUR

BY

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## FOREWORD

EIGHT articles, five of which have come out in the magazine "Kunst und Künstler," (Art and Artist) appear here bundled together as a book and with a title. Although having different points of departure, they belong together, all of them centering around the question of genuineness.

The harassed reader may wonder that I, at times, make so much ado about language. I ask him to reflect that the only bridge between us is one of words. Moreover, in looking at a thing, we measure what we see in concepts, and concepts can be expressed in words only. Our language is an heritage which we must earn in order to possess; we only get be-

## FOREWORD

yond our forefathers when we extend  
and shift the track of words on which the  
concepts roll along.

CONCERNING THE OPINION  
OF EXPERTS



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COMPLAINTS about expert opinion are increasing. A picture now can scarcely be sold unless it is accompanied by a slip on which somebody or other assures us that the picture is the work of this or that master. Many dealers, particularly those who are well informed and conscientious, feel that this custom is a burden and a disgrace.

If a Wit wished to score existing conditions, he could find nothing better as a text than the situation which has recently come to light in the course of a law suit in Hamburg. Somewhere there sat a gentleman who called himself an art scholar and who, for so much an hour, wrote authentications for pictures which he had never seen and even, for pictures which hadn't

as yet been painted. No authority—a totally unknown name. Nevertheless, the testimonials he signed had the desired effect, if only in the slums of the art trade, where these forgeries were handled.

I do not wish to put into the same class this man of doubtful integrity and those gentlemen who, through scholarly research have earned positions of authority; who are known, and rightly, as connoisseurs in their own spheres, and from whom reputable dealers secure authentications. I assume rather that they judge according to the best of their knowledge and conscience, and that they know what they are about. But even in the most favorable cases, the business of giving expert opinions, in the form which it has assumed during the last few years, has dubious consequences. This is bad for scholarship because the contact with business is detrimental. But it is also bad for



the quality of the collections and, finally, for the ethics of the trade.

How was it formerly? How has the expert opinion acquired such weight and such significance?

Formerly the collector, even if he had taste of his own, was glad to be advised by someone well versed in the field. He would perhaps maintain a friendly contact with a connoisseur whose judgment he valued and whom he interested in the growth of his collection. Not infrequently the dealers themselves were the confidantes of their customers and made it a point of honor to prove themselves worthy of this trust. True, they still had a rich store to draw from and could be particular.

For more than one reason this healthy relationship has crumbled away. In the first place, scholarship has become so specialized that even the best informed dealers can no longer keep pace with the

experts. Secondly, the good and authentic works of art have become more rare, while the number of dealers and agents has increased so that the competition in buying and selling, the struggle for goods and the struggle for customers have become more acute. Thirdly, foreign elements have forced their way into the fraternity of dealers, since aristocrats, ladies, poor sons of rich houses, are eagerly joining in,—usually people who do not trouble themselves about the purity of a firm name because they do not possess any firm name. Fourthly, prices have risen and the difference in price between different works of art has risen even higher, while at the same time the dealers have grown poorer. Therefore the risk in the business has dangerously increased. Finally there has come the Americanization of the market. The man in Detroit or Toledo, to whom a picture is offered by mail, does not approach the art dealer, still less the

connoisseur; the dealer approaches him. He is suspicious, uncertain, and has a hard time forming his own judgment. The dealer or agent combats doubts with authentications. The man in Toledo does not know much about European authorities. Those scholars whose names he reads under the authentications are all alike to him, therefore he prefers the optimistic yes-sayers. The dealers who communicate directly with the American collectors have a natural interest in elevating their obliging experts to the position of authorities.

One can guess how difficult the relations must be which spring up between dealers and connoisseurs, regardless, or perhaps not exactly regardless, of whether the authentications are made out as a favor, for a fee, or on a commission basis. In any case, a piece of paper comes between the collector and the connoisseur.

The collector believes that he can dispense with the exchange of ideas with ex-

perienced connoisseurs since their wisdom is delivered to him in black and white on buying the picture.

The dealer passes the burden of the heavy responsibility to the expert. Formerly he had to look at the pictures sharply and form his own judgment, because he alone guaranteed them. Now, in case of an error, the seller washes his hands of the affair, and his expert is of course not held financially responsible for the mistake. Therefore the responsibility has been precariously split up between morality and scholarship on one side and business on the other. The dealer no longer has any real inducement to strive seriously after connoisseurship, since his opinion is of little or no importance.

The expert opinion has grown up on the ground of a silly overestimation of the importance of the artist's name and has in turn strengthened this superstition. Since usually in the authentications nothing is

established except the artist's name, the naïve collector fancies that it depends only on that, that the name alone determines the value of the work of art. Not infrequently the deals are closed by letter, without inspection, and only on the basis of the authentication.

So long as it is a question of famous names, the delusion of the collector is understandable. Rembrandt, the man in Toledo tells himself, was a great master, therefore a recognized work of his hand must, under all circumstances be valuable. But it is not only a question of famous names, but strangely enough, of a name just by itself. People do not seem to grasp the fact that every picture, even the most miserable sham, was painted by some person; that every person has a name and that it is usually nothing but an accident if this name is known. If the scholar says: "this is a splendid south German picture of the period around 1460," dealer and

collector turn away disappointed. But if he thinks he has discovered a second picture by the same painter, whom he invests with a name of his own making; if he says—this picture is by the “Master of the Saint Francis”—then dealer and collector are reasonably satisfied, although they would prefer a real name, no matter how obscure.

In this way, art scholarship has become an economically productive activity, and there are even scholars who profit by it.

These intimations surely suffice to arouse the call for reform. But what is to be done? The State could perhaps forbid its officials to give expert opinions, but what would be gained by that? The dealers would from necessity approach other experts, and there is no reason to suppose that the authentications would then be more cautious or correct, or that the danger, which is rooted more in the situa-

tion itself than in the persons involved in it, would be decreased.

Some have suggested an organization, government regulation. But nothing would be improved by that. On the contrary, the official stamp on the authentication would invest the opinion with a false legitimacy. The State ought not to assume the responsibility for its appointee, Dr. Müller recognizing a picture correctly. Moreover the government could not eliminate unofficial, unsworn "experts." It would also be beyond its power to cause the collectors and dealers to trust its sworn experts. The State cannot invest scholars with authority. That reputation upon which the validity of the authentication rests is hard to acquire and cannot be obtained through scholarly achievement alone. It is also hard to lose, due to inertia.

The business of giving expert opinions can probably not be stamped out, but its

fangs can be drawn through the enlightenment of the collectors. It should be hammered into them by every possible means not to overestimate authentications. I shall address a few principles to the collectors in the hope that they may have some effect:

1. Trust your own eyes, study pictures carefully yourselves, strive to become connoisseurs.
2. Go to the dealers, look at what they have, do not wait for offers. Turn to well-informed dealers who cherish the honor of their business.
3. Do not overestimate the significance of the artist's name. There are some excellent pictures whose creators are unknown.
4. The opinions regarding artists rest upon more or less certain guesswork. The positive way in which many people testify is nothing



## GENUINE AND COUNTERFEIT

but self deception of the expert, agreement, sometimes mere bluff.

5. Many pictures are badly preserved. Nothing is said about that in the authentications. The value of a painting is, to a great degree, dependent upon its condition.
6. Seek intercourse with connoisseurs. In direct exchange of ideas with them you will learn more than there is on the papers handed you by dealers or agents. In this way you can explode that mutually protective relation which has developed between dealers and scholars.



ON THE RESTORING  
OF OLD PICTURES



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TO RESTORE: the intention and duty of this activity seems to be directed towards bringing a monument, a building, or a painting back to its original condition. We wish to see what the artist saw, directly after he had carried out his creative purpose. In most cases this wish cannot be fulfilled. The picture has undergone changes in many details. Time has done some of it, and men have done some. The paint has not remained the same; it has hardened, cracked, been faded by the light and has darkened. Although such damages do not inevitably depreciate the artistic value, they cannot be removed. Nor can that which man has done be completely effaced. The ironed-out *impasto* of the paint is irrevocably lost. The

picture has been varnished and revarnished. These layers of varnish, which make the painting dull, often beyond recognition, can be removed, but no amount of cleaning can remove the dark residue of old dirt and old varnish which is embedded in the uneven body of paint and in the cracks.

The work of the restorer is useful and gratifying so long as it consists in uncovering and reviving the picture, in removing disfiguring additions; not in actually recreating the original condition, but rather in making visible as much of the original as is still extant. The restorer furthermore preserves what remains of the picture and prevents future decay.

In many cases the original is preserved neither in its complete size nor in its former fullness and vigor. This often first becomes apparent in the cleaning or in the regeneration of the varnish. Parts of the paint have been chipped or scaled off;

after the painting-over is removed, holes appear. The drawing and modeling prove to have partially disappeared, to have been rubbed off or cleaned away. What then? What shall the restorer do about the sadly fragmentary condition which he has, of course, not produced, but which he has brought to light? If he does nothing, he runs the risk of being accused of damaging the work and diminishing its value.

Dare he replace what is lost by filling in and repairing?

This question will be answered "yes" or "no" according to the point of view of the one who is asked. The work of art is a document for the scholar, a source of pleasure for the amateur and an object of value for the owner.

That the scholar will answer the question with a sharp "No," there can be no doubt. In his eyes, every restoration which goes beyond cleaning, preserving and uncovering is a piece of counterfeit-

ing—whether successful or not. Indeed, logically he must regard the skillful and consequently deceptive repair as more damaging and dangerous than the unsuccessful and therefore easily recognizable. He wants to see as much as has been preserved of what the artist created, and he revolts against being left in uncertainty regarding that which is lacking.

The connoisseur judges from a less firm point of view. Of course he too would like to see the authentic original, free of any trimmings. He seeks Memling's art, not the restoration of Müller, but, on the other hand, he fears that faulty spots, holes, conspicuous defects and disturbances of the continuity may spoil his enjoyment of it. In this dilemma most connoisseurs probably recognize the right of the restorer to fill in and repair, providing that he works in the spirit of the old master and is able to recreate what is no



longer there. But this is demanding something impossible from the restorer.

The task is technically, and from the point of style unsolvable. Memling worked with certain pigments and materials; the restorer with others. And even if the restorer could proceed with exactly the same technique as Memling, he would still not be in a position to repair what is preserved of the original because time has been at work on it since Memling. That which is made is never exactly like that which has grown.

The restorer cannot break away from the perspective of his time. No matter how well informed he is, his efforts at copying and imitating will never exactly coincide with the style, the character and the expression of the old master. They will always betray themselves by misunderstandings. Because he senses the hopeless pedantry of his work, he will be inclined to make the new resemble the

old by darkening and clouding it over in an effort to cover up what he has done. This mixing of true and false elements, this opaque fog precipitates as slimy phrases in the literature of art.

The connoisseur's apprehension of and aversion from all repaired restorations will become stronger as he gathers more experience and as his artistic knowledge develops.

After the scholar has won the connoisseur over to his side, they betake themselves to the collector, the dealer, the director of the gallery.

And now the affair becomes serious. The question is shifted from the realm of theoretical deliberations into that of practical decisions. Only he who owns a work of art or who, as museum director, exercises the rights of the owner can give orders to the restorer and prescribe the limits of his interference and the methods of the restoration.

To the collector and the dealer the painting has an economic value, also to the gallery director, particularly in case it is he who acquired the work for the museum, for although not financially liable, his ambition, his vanity and his reputation are involved.

Now the value—the alleged artistic value and the market value—are to a great degree dependent upon the condition of the picture. A Memling is just so much more valuable the better it is preserved, the less there is missing and the less it seems to need supplementing.

Under the pressure of financial interests the work of the restorer is distracted and corrupted.

At bottom it is not the recreation of the original condition which is demanded, but a creation of the highest possible market value. The restorer must do something, but do it so that no one notices what he has done. The correctness of the

repairing is not appreciated for itself, but only in so far as it is guaranteed to be invisible. The subjective, individual, time-bound taste of the collector, the dealer and the restorer are drawn into coöperation in a very dubious way. The picture of Memling is so treated that it appears to be faultlessly preserved, that it conforms in appearance to expectations and corresponds to the—mistaken, of course—ideas of Memling's art.

It will not be easy to abolish this dishonest habit of forging as long as pictures are bought and sold. Nevertheless, if it were thinkable that the obsession about the appearance of old pictures be abandoned, the situation might be reversed. Let us picture what would happen if a fanatical scholar, as director of a museum, were to show the pictures which have been entrusted to his care bare as they are, without supplements, restorations, free from retouching and varnish, if the habit

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of seeing pictures in this condition should spread into the circles of collectors and dealers. Idols would fall, values be transformed, judgment become objective, sober and pure—altogether a hard cure.

Just as the fragmentary condition of antique sculptures satisfies the scholar as a sign of genuineness without offending the connoisseur, so in the future we might look at even partially destroyed paintings with a quickened imagination, while viewing the beautified and restored ones with suspicion and displeasure.



## THE FORGERY OF OLD PICTURES





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THE supply of purchasable works by the old masters is becoming smaller every year because some of the pieces which appear on the market go into public collections and are thus forever withdrawn from the trade. Therefore the chase after those things which appear desirable to contemporary taste is becoming more heated. Prices are being pushed up, particularly since the circle of amateurs is steadily widening. The decline in the old countries of the passion to collect, which is primarily the result of economic distress, is amply offset by the rising interest of museums and individuals outside of Europe and particularly by the desire of wealthy Americans to buy. Since the demand is greater than the supply—at least in cer-

tain fields—the temptation to forgery is growing.

It has become both easier and more difficult to manufacture pictures that seem old masterpieces. The prospect of forging successfully and of deceiving the collector has improved, inasmuch as knowledge of the history of art has spread even into the circles of the forgers. The understanding of the technique and the style of the old masters has increased, but for the same reason and about to the same degree the success of the forger is made difficult because the detecting eyes of collectors have gained as much in insight as the swindlers have gained in refinement.

Whoever wishes to produce a Memling without being Memling, or in other words, passes off a picture as "genuine" confronts a precarious task. In the first place, he does not possess the pigments and materials which Memling employed, and the technical procedure of the old master

is a secret. With his materials he must attempt to produce that which Memling achieved with other materials. What he does becomes even more unnatural and hopeless because, not only does he have to work as Memling did, but also in the spirit of his time. In the course of the years the layers of paint in the old picture have altered. Characteristics of age must be simulated, wrinkles added and that which has come into being through a natural process must be artificially produced.

A sign of genuineness is the crack formation of the paint and the *gesso* which underlies the paint. They are a bane to the forger, and he employs cunning artifices to deceive the connoisseur, who gives these signs very attentive consideration. The simulation of cracks by drawing on the new paint with a hard pencil or scratching with a pointed instrument is practiced by the harmless restorer, but hardly by the technically advanced

forger. The network of cracks drawn with the hand is so clearly distinguishable by its lines and appearance from the "genuine" cracks that the eye aided merely by a pocket lens can with difficulty be deceived in this way. The forgers have discovered a method of producing something similar to real crack formation. They coat the new paint with a lacquer which, contracting when heated, cracks and pulls the underlying paint apart. In this process, however, the *gesso* remains flat and smooth, whereas the genuine crack formation proceeds from this base. So one need only uncover some spot in the base by rubbing away the color to recognize in the superficial crack formation the work of the forger.

The use of a genuinely cracked *gesso* from an old picture makes a much more dangerous counterfeit. There are plenty of worthless and badly preserved old pictures which may be obtained for a little

money. The forger who uses an old panel as the basis of his counterfeit has secured for himself a considerable advantage in the secret contest with the expert. The forger faces the task of so covering with new paint the genuine gesso which he has completely or partially exposed that the crack formation remains visible. To attain this end he daubs the small surfaces between the cracks with his brush or with transparent paint. The old panel still bears remnants of the original painting, the outline of the drawing and parts of the genuine paint. The forger can either clean off the old paint or let it entirely or partially remain. In the second instance he begins to feel himself a restorer. Since the amount preserved can vary considerably, the boundary between forgery and restoration is questionable. The decisive thing is the sentiment, the morality, the tendency of the work. The restorer preserves with anxious care and supplements

only in case of necessity. The forger, on the other hand, works consciously under the delusion that he can do it at least as well as the old master. He thoughtlessly removes preserved parts which disturb him in the completion of his work and transforms the ruins of the old picture, which he handles by no means tenderly, into the new creation which his taste considers perfect.

Such half-breeds form the most dubious parts of the material that the history of art has to deal with.

Grown old and pious, the forger works as restorer, and his forgeries are innocuous in comparison with his restorations which, being technically much more cunning than the accomplishments of the innocent restorers, irritate research extremely.

The indicated procedures may be recognized by a sharp scrutiny of the material, an observation similar to that of the natural scientist. In many cases the

usual testing with alcohol, which dissolves the new pigment but not the old, may bring about the discovery. But this experiment is not infallible. The forgers are prepared for precisely this kind of investigation and have found means to protect themselves by using pigments which are not soluble in alcohol.

If the counterfeit is not distinguishable from the genuine work by technical tests, it may still offend the sensitive connoisseur by its failure to comply with the demands of style. He who undertakes to restore a "Memling" ventures upon a hopeless task, for the spiritual attitude of the forger is different from that of the artist, who created honestly, naïvely and spontaneously. This difference must become discernible in the visible form even when the imitator has, by unusual skill and penetrating study, become familiar with the essence of the model he wishes to copy—just as imitated handwriting devi-

ates from the natural. The artist creates spontaneously, and is subjectively free; the forger works arbitrarily and is bound by his subject. All counterfeits betray themselves, by a pedantically anxious procedure. The forger does not dare abandon himself, dare not follow his natural taste, but must work with cold calculation, painful caution and a squinting glance. He has a prospect of success so long as he copies exactly; every assertion of independence ensnares him in danger.

If, for example, he wishes to depict the clothing a trifle freely it becomes evident that he knows hopelessly little about the dress of the past. He probably knows in outline, in appearance, from old pictures, the hat, as it was worn about 1520, but he does not know how the inside of it looked, how it was sewed and constructed. If he changes the position of the head, if he wishes to show a view of the hat which deviates only slightly from that shown in



the model, he reveals his ignorance of circumstances, since none of us has any experience with the appearances of the past other than the mirror of art has shown us. If the counterfeit is nothing more than a correct copy it will be easily unmasked by a comparison with the original. Therefore the forgers prefer to choose a method of combination, composing a seemingly original picture by copying it from several examples. Thereby they venture into the danger of uniting heterogenous, stylistically disharmonious parts into a conflicting whole.

A head after the style of Jan van Eyck copies in certain parts a well-known original; with it there may be a landscape background in the manner of Rogers van der Weyden, the hands, strongly agitated, are taken from a painting by Joos van Cleve. The man has on a hat such as was worn in 1515 and wears a full beard

which, taboo in the fifteenth century, only became the fashion in 1520.

Even before one has recognized the derivation of the parts and can prove the fraud, one feels in such inorganic compositions that something is wrong, that co-ordination is lacking, that technique, representation and perspective do not fit each other. All independent work of the forger shows a misunderstanding, just as every combination results in a discrepancy.

If the forger fills in an old panel which has come into his hands in a damaged condition or which he has cleaned off in order to supplant the crude genuine outline with a finer one, contradictions of a subtler sort arise which are comparatively hard to detect. The crack formation in the *gesso* is genuine and even, in certain places conspicuously visible. In other places, where the forger has modeled them carefully the cracks are not apparent at

all, are less clear or are of an entirely different nature. The "improving" work extends first to the heads, which, carefully rounded with glazed shadows, smartened up, opaque and with an unavoidably modern expression stand next to transparent drapery, in which the old paint is preserved and not altered by azurite. Genuine paintings are consistently good or mediocre or weak, but such hybrids are conspicuous by their irregular quality, whereby genuine crudeness, placed next to false fineness, creates a painful and bewildering impression.

My remarks seem to lead to the conclusion that a connoisseur can not be deceived by forgeries, and that under all conditions the organically created work can be distinguished from the fake.

From time to time errors of distinguished art scholars are welcomed by malicious lovers of sensation. From such happenings the laity conclude, not with-

out satisfaction, that there is no reliable professional knowledge in the sphere of art. A coarse thought process is not able to reckon with possibilities. For the standing of the connoisseur the decisive thing is the percentage of correct to false judgments. Infallibility should not be expected—even doctors and judges err. That the single error of the art scholar threatens to throw him and his profession into disrepute which in turn results in a stubborn resistance to the admission of a mistake may have its foundation in the particular nature of the art judgment.

The art judgment can not be subject to control or proof. The layman has no conception of how it is made. It is accepted on faith out of confidence in the authority. The connoisseur comes on the scene like a magician, whom the mob, flitting from credulence to suspicion, is only too ready to expose as a charlatan.

Experience shows that reputable con-

noisseurs have usually fallen the victims of those forgeries whose style was new. That is, the first products of a forger are the most dangerous. Obviously it is easier to observe: "this is an example of that type of work which has become suspicious" than to say: "this cannot be genuine." The positive characteristics of the forgery betray themselves more readily than the negative.

Our eye is not always sharply focussed, our suspicion not constantly wakeful. Outward circumstances attending the exhibition of the work of art can diminish the critical inclination. If the work is introduced by a reputable dealer, at a high price, and with convincing certainty, the connoisseur easily forgets to question its genuineness.

The sight of an electric arclight can inspire in one a lyric poem to the moon, but only so long as one fancies that the lamp is the moon. Common sense here

interjects: "therefore the impression is nothing more than imagination." Actually the tremendously complicated process of æsthetic enjoyment is, to an unexpectedly high degree, determined by prejudices, and presupposes a spiritual disposition which originates from former experiences of looking at things.

The delight in the creations of the old masters contains historical knowledge, pleasure in culture, respect for antiquity. The master's name arouses sensations which flood the given complex of form and color and reduce the sharpness of observation. The impression which genuine Memlings have evoked and which lives in the memory can, when visual alertness is suspended, be awakened by a forgery. Strangely enough, forgeries before being unmasked have often aroused a high degree of enthusiasm and the loud and general applause which they were accorded contributed to dim the critical eye.

No matter how successfully the art scholar may have labored to enter into the manner of the past, no matter how sincere and deep his love for the old masters, the gulf of time can never be entirely bridged. Something harshly foreign, not agreeable to our taste remains operative in the world of forms created by our ancestors. This, however, is seldom conceded. The forgery, a contemptible nothing when once seen through, possesses before its disclosure a double charm; it is supposedly the work of a great and famous old master, and is also the product of a contemporary, whose taste is akin to our own. For many, the false Memling may be the first Memling they have ever truly admired.

The experienced connoisseur who has attained a position of authority, who feels his own preeminence and does not need to fear further criticism loses easily in the routine of professional activities that

fear of error which stimulates his attentiveness and preserves the keen edge of his observation. The master dare not cease to feel himself a student. Having, through experience reached the point where he imagines himself safe, he is very close to the danger of falling a victim to deception of a new sort.

Since the ability of the connoisseur depends upon the intensity of his visual experiences, upon the clarity and distinctness of his memories, the professional expert is in danger of crowding the limited capacity of his memory with hybrid images. This is inevitable under the circumstances because he has to look at many more mediocre, badly preserved and dubious pictures than at good and incontestable masterpieces. If he has erred and has not become aware of his error, the false image poisons his pictorial fancy. He then approaches later pieces with a warped standard, so to speak. He will only remain



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a match for the forgers in the constant struggle with them if he time and again steels and refreshes his judgment by untiring study of undoubtedly genuine masterpieces.



THE PICTORIAL AND THE  
PICTURESQUE

(*Das Malerische*)



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WHAT we need is a vocabulary. The obscurity in art books has reached the point where the reader no longer reads, but at best takes in the shower of words as he would music. When the author is still at pains to formulate his impression, he is satisfied to find words which are fixed in his own mind as symbols of his optic experiences. But he is usually not conscious of the heavy obligation to choose commonly understood symbols. After all, words are nothing but agreements. The agreement upon which all understanding depends must be made, then be strictly observed and perhaps revised from time to time.

This is, of course, a difficult task. The limitation of a vocabulary stands out in

sharp contrast to the infinity of visible things. The cover of words, so to speak, is too short. The various terms, pulled this way and that, have become soft, thin, and worn through use and abuse.

A vocabulary is needed and could help a bit—with definitions. This is not so necessary for technical terms of foreign origin. They do not cause much trouble. Once explained and understood, they perform their service by remaining within fixed limits. Such a vocabulary as I have in mind would primarily be concerned with the general concepts which, being vague and empty, are much more apt to be misunderstood, since the unsuspecting reader, not anticipating any difficulties, does not stop to reflect about them. Concepts like artist, form, light, space, quality, fantasy, which are the most commonly used, should be studied with reference to their meaning and its possible changes. The several meanings of a word should be

defined and separated from each other.

In analyzing the concept "picturesque" (malerische) I shall give an example of what I mean.

In the vernacular, an appearance worth seeing, which stimulates and occupies our eye is called picturesque. If we look at the way the word is built, that which it is physically possible to paint is "paintable," but that which is adapted to being painted is "pictorial" or "picturesque." When used with reference to the object in hand, it designates the motif which would be gratifying to the painter. Again, when used with reference to the work of art it denotes that which the painter with the available means has successfully represented, according to the canons of style of his art.

At this point the concept splits up, depending upon whether by "painting" we understand one or another mode of expression. I put "painting" in contrast to

representing that which is inartistic as well as mathematical, architectural, plastic and, in a narrow sense, graphic. The zig-zag profile of high mountains is picturesque, although it can be depicted with a sharp slate pencil. But in the other and narrower sense, a conflagration, a flaming blaze depicted by brush and color in surfaces and spots, with soft transitions is picturesque and pictorial.

The apple is picturesque and pictorial in contrast to the billiard ball, the tree in contrast to the column, generally speaking, the work of nature in contrast to the product of man. All balls are alike in shape. No apple is like any other. The incidental, accidental shape is picturesque, as compared with the shape based upon calculation.

In the realm of mathematical figures the oblong is more pictorial than the square, the oval is more pictorial than the circle. The unexpected shape, suggesting



freedom and spontaneity satisfies the curiosity of the eye.

We experience the picturesque appearance in "moving." Movement, however, cannot be depicted directly except in the movie. Still, the picture of the world around us is picturesque as a result of action, since it is determined by growth, by natural events and by the play of light. We perceive in the picturesque form the trace and effect of movements which the nervous and high spirited observer feels and tries to express. The sea is more picturesque than the land. All that exists appears much more as a product of the past, transforming itself into something new if it presents itself in rich, multi-articulate forms.

The extreme point, the *ne plus ultra* of picturesque objects is to be found in chaotic nature. The artist in seeing her, no matter upon what stage, in what way or with what means, rationalizes and

regulates her at the same time. In this process, nature becomes, through many gradations, less "picturesque." Naturalism in reciprocal effect with the longing for irrational hidden things is a strong motive force of artistic development. Two deeply rooted needs struggle with each other, namely this delight in the given richness and that intellectual obligation to fix the flowing picture of the world, to recognize in it the immutable law. The sense for order is fighting with desire of the eye for adventure.

I shall state a few antithetical pairs:

Line	Surface
Type	Individuality
Anticipation	Accident
Stylization	Observation
Reason	Sensation
Classic	Romantic
Seriousness	Play

In all these cases the notion of the pic-

turesque inclines toward the concept on the right.

Let us suppose that the primordial motivating force of all artistic endeavor is boredom, just as it is that of all play. If we imagine how urgent the need would be for filling and enlivening empty time with rhythm and music, and empty space with visible intersections, we understand the driving sensation of pleasure which is freed in the "picturesque."

If these suggestions have made distinct the infinite inclusiveness of the concept "picturesque" ("malerische") the author will handle it with care. It should never be used absolutely, but always relatively, and it should always be made clear either explicitly or implicitly in what sense it is meant.

The same is true for other concepts.



## FORM AND COLOR



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WITH language we have also inherited the understanding and error it implies. With a prejudice which is preserved in the customary antithesis of form and color we delude ourselves that we may see color without form or form without color. Color and form do not bear to one another the relation of two qualities, but rather they are like the quality and quantity of a substance. Our eyes take in color alone. That which we call form is the extension of color, its location in the plane of vision.

If, as the thinking person always does, we seek a being, a thing, beneath the appearance, beneath the localized color, if we consider the phenomenon as a report, then the location of the color requires more attention than its shade. In looking

at things, we primarily observe the circumference which describes form and body, the border rather than that which it borders.

When I have looked at a red circle, can my memory retain more vividly the circle or the red? The further I am removed in time from the visual experience, the more easily I succeed in analyzing the memory of the picture. I can forget the quality or the quantity according to whether I am mathematically interested or sensuously receptive. One should speak of form and color only in theory, and consider that a complete elimination of "color" in favor of "form" is not successful—even in fantasy. It will only be possible to alter arbitrarily, to neutralize, denature the image in our memory by substituting black or gray upon a white background for the color impressions we originally received.

Suppose we go back in the history of looking at things into prehistoric times



and try to imagine its course over thousands of years. At first, and over long periods of time, needs and practical wants sharpened the eye. Man first perceived signs and retained the memory of visual experiences to enable him to escape dangerous animals, and to select wood suitable for this or that purpose. The question which prehistoric man most put to his eye was whether a certain animal could kill him or he it. He learned to measure size and distance.

For the hunter as well as the hunted the apparent form of pursued or fleeing creatures was more significant than the apparent color, if only because the light conditions more strongly vary the coloring than the outline.

Therefore the recognition and knowledge of things and man's mastery of the physical world have been promoted by the observation and standardization of measures.

Civilized man becomes, by force of habit accustomed to seeing black—if only because through much reading he receives a training in the abstract and dead color, black on white.

The charm of the visual in itself, apart from what it could tell about the nature of things has, in various forms, allured the senses and emotions of human beings. The germs of æsthetic observation, the delight in looking at beautiful objects, the beginnings of practicing art, the inclination to ornament and decorate are all aroused by the predilection for artificial, arbitrarily shaped colors. Colors were played with; they were not taken seriously as was form, to master which man had had a more rigid schooling through the struggle for survival.

The visual impression came to be divided into its constituent parts, form and color, since man like a playful child dabbled with color while he concerned

himself with form as a measuring adult. Following the precept: divide and rule, man took possession of the visual world.

Form only unites with color in the last stages in the life of mankind just as in the development of individual painters. Then only is appearance perceived in its entirety by a simultaneous realization of the boundary as well as that which it bounds. Exactly for that reason the objection to the antithesis of form and color is not just idle playing with words but a young idea struggling to find linguistic expression.

In the beginning and in earlier stages, in handicrafts as well as in academic theory, appearance has been divided up. Form and color were studied and reproduced either one after the other, side by side, or independent from each other. The first step in teaching and in the creative process was to draw, that is, to outline in some neutral, detached color and then to fix the degree of light by hatching in or shading, finally

to put on the pigments, to fit them in or, one might even say, to lay them on the top of it all. The history of the art of painting may be regarded as a gradual overcoming of the analytical way of looking at things. Just as little as one could have attained any fruitful biological knowledge so long as one presumed to be able to distinguish between body and soul, could one comprehend without prejudice that which he sees so long as he separates form and color.

Let us compare a picture by Jan van Eyck with a picture by Cézanne. Jan van Eyck compares well with any one in brilliancy, splendour and expressive strength of color shading, in exactitude and refinement of draftsmanship. Now if we state that he observed form on the one hand and color on the other and not as did Cézanne, in one act, colored form or formed color, we do in no way point towards an individual deficiency but

rather to a limitation of the period which not even the independent genius of a master could escape. A Madonna by Jan van Eyck, which is 10 cm. high and therefore looked at as though from a great distance, wears a flaming red dress which, from the location of the figure, ought to be much paler and more neutral. On the other hand, a tree trunk painted by Cézanne which, according to its thickness in the picture, is seen from a certain distance, shows exactly that color which it would possess under the given conditions of location. The higher truth, the organic unity which has been reached at Cézanne's stage, rests in the fact that finally that dualistic way of seeing, which reigns in the handicrafts and academic education has been abandoned.

The practice of art following its own laws became more and more dissociated from other intellectual and spiritual efforts. Its tendency to lose all relationship

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with sensuous reality, a tendency which was caused by the analytical way of looking at things was, upon a late stage of civilization, checked by a new naïvety.

## ORIGINALITY





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IN EVERYDAY parlance we pronounce, by the outworn word "original" an evasive judgment when a work of art has had an effect which excites by its novelty. We may be struck by a form, a spectacle, or a combination which we imagine we are seeing for the first time. The judgment is empty, the praise faint; it is preliminary, since we say little regarding the nature of the creation which attracts us by its strangeness. We only state an impression, regarding the cause of which we are not clear ourselves and we lack experience which would tell us whether the effect will last and prove true.

But the expression "original" has another meaning which we do not use—or at least should not use without being sure

about the foundation of our impression, since it announces a final judgment, *viz*: "this work of art by its qualities guarantees the manner of creation which is characteristic of genuine productions." Thus the noun an "original" is a label which is unequivocally the contrary of a copy or imitation.

The word original in the aforesaid limited sense emphasizes a connection with a beginning, even if it warns against believing that a creation comes out of nothing.

Among the verbs: to make, to create, to carry out, to produce, the first two indicate nothing about any particular manner of working, while the other two suggest an act of moving something, of altering its location. The work of art, it is implied, must have been in existence somewhere before the "originator" can bring it to light.

The German language turns with veiled doubt against the doctrine of the Bible

when it prefers the expression "Schöpfung" (creation) for the process by which the world came into existence, since in strict orthodoxy it is supposed to have come out of nothing. For "schöpfen" means to alter the location of fluid matter. The matter was already in existence. The artist is honored not a little by the application of the terms "creation" and "to create" to his work. The philologist will probably be able to show that the transfer of such lofty, sublime and mystic words to human activities is of rather recent date. It is probably as recent as the idea that artistic work is different from any other human activity, particularly quite apart from science, scholarship and craftsmanship.

Our view does not reach farther than to the spring of creation. The moment of stepping into the outside world we perceive to be the hour of birth. We watch only the execution, since the begetting,

the conceiving and the maturing have taken place in the unfathomable womb of the Mothers.

The work of art is original; it springs from the organism of its originator. It therefore is peculiar to this artist and a part of him, so to speak. After having completed its natural passage through an individuality it steps forward into the daylight, fresh, resplendent, and of a nature never before seen, to be greeted as "original."

As originality, being a result of organic creation, a mark of genuine birth, became more valuable to the spectators, those engaged in artistic work strove more intensely to achieve originality. This endeavor entangled them in the paradox of trying to look for something which, when sought, could not be found. The determination to be different seduces an artist to imitate forms foreign to his own genius. Such forms seem peculiar to him; but no

artist finds the form which is given him to use and is inescapably his as peculiar. Thus the endeavor to be original has become a Will-O-the-Wisp and a danger. It impedes the natural unfolding of talent and by extravagant exaggeration it leads to mannerism and sensationalism, to manifest peculiarities which least belong to the legitimate possessions of the artist.

If, then, a pseudo originality has come into existence the language has good cause to split up the adjective and to invent another word ("original") to designate the genuine originality, while using original ("originell") to designate, if not the artificial, at least the infinite number of cases in which the question of genuine originality must remain undecided. In reality the judgment is often difficult. The artist striving after originality will naturally avoid outright imitation. \*He may even honestly search within himself, in his longing for something particular. But the

goal will appear to him as a coined form, and a form coined by someone else. By going his predecessor one better, by turning what he has done upside down, by bending and distorting, he will force a sham originality.

As the surest mark of genuineness, the inner unity of a piece of art guarantees to us that it has been nourished by the resources of one individual during the entire process of creation, from the conception to the last stroke of execution. The certainty of organic connection will come as a matter of course. The harmony of the parts with the whole, and of the parts to each other, the harmony of form and content quiets us because it gives us the feeling that it could not be otherwise. The whole is permeated with rays coming from the center of a personality and it is densely filled with the color and scent of the individual creator.

Indeed, the genius has ever inherited,

absorbed and selected before he produces. But while the imitator and the perfect technician work with what they have scraped together in the daylight of their consciousness, the true artist experiences this union of extraneous elements in the realm of subconscious emotion. It is with him an early stage in the creative process. In his subterranean workshop it is so hot that these elements melt until they are unrecognizable and a new form comes into being.

Logically, the demands which spring from the concept of originality can never be fulfilled in a work of art. Genius dwells in a human being who knows and plans. This endangers the purity of creation. No artist produces his work as a tree produces its fruit. In relation to his creation, the originator is not only father and mother, but midwife as well.

Even though I have not distinguished two realms by a clear line of demarcation,

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this analysis may prove helpful in making visible the top and bottom of a scale. At one end there stands the genius, at the other the faker. In each case we have to decide to what extent the original (originell) appearance rests upon original (original) creation.



## STYLE AND MANNER



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THE term manner which in colloquial speech has various shades of meaning, when used technically by the art historian has also many interpretations. It is no wonder that frequent misunderstandings arise, since the writer's notion of the word is often entirely different from the reader's.

"Manner" in everyday language means a rather suspicious way of behaving, an artificial, stilted, affected being, pose, over-ornamentation. An instructive change of meaning can be traced here. Originally a term used by scholars, almost synonymous with kind or species, this expression was sometimes used where we have become accustomed to speak of style. One used to speak of "Maniera

greca" of "Maniere gothique," of the manner of the engraving, meaning thereby types of form which are locally, temporally or technically limited. In relation to the value of a work of art, the concept was at first completely neutral. In colloquial speech the word does not always necessarily contain an objection or a depreciatory judgment. One speaks of "genteel manners" to mean well educated, praiseworthy behavior.

There came a time when good training in the practice of art no longer enjoyed a high position. The gradual transformation in the shade of this concept is connected with the development of the theory of art. As creative force was sought in naïvety, vision and fantasy, instead of in knowledge, tradition and taste, as the undisciplined growth became distinguished from the artificially cultivated product, as the mysterious power of the unconscious was discovered, a concept

was needed to designate the form which had been created in a genuinely artistic process, as opposed to the studied, consciously developed, arbitrarily produced one. The word "style" displaces the word "manner," or rather lowers it.

Style means form. It implies appreciation. Style is a river, manner, a canal. The thirteenth century built in the gothic style, the nineteenth in the gothic manner—that is the way we express it today. In the vernacular we praise a man for having style, meaning that his qualities, his looks, his clothes, his behavior manifest a harmonious character which creates an æsthetically pleasing impression. The harmony, the necessary sequence of the several manifestations or parts rest upon the fact that an unhampered force flows from the center of the personality through the entire body, directing and dominating it. One can acquire good manners. One either has style or one hasn't.

The type of style is determined by location, time, individual and technical processes. One speaks of Roman or of French style, of the style of Titian or of the style of the pointrel—always with the favorable prejudice that the perceptible, æsthetically appreciated form is the pictorially fixed character of a period, a place, a man or a technique.

The distinction between style and manner has gradually become pronounced, since, in judging works of art, it was noticed that the form had been created in one way or another. In the rough, two kinds of production were differentiated, the arbitrary and the spontaneous; specifically artistic action was expected in the realm of spontaneous creation, while arbitrary production was assumed to result in imitations, unfounded, causeless and rootless, the outgrowth of creative weakness.

Let us seek to express and describe the

marks of the genuine work of art and to state more precisely the difference between style and manner. We look for harmony, sincerity, unconcern, a free and rapid sweep, as the distinguishing characteristics of a spontaneous, emotionally genuine mode of creation. And still, observations are deceptive, because calculating, artistically appreciative experience is just as apt to produce these results as is the creative force. Even the degree of deviation can be interpreted one way or another. To be sure, the mannerist betrays himself in that he does not achieve his purpose, does not persist in his endeavor, falls back from the intended way of expression into his natural one, lets himself go, changes his plans—but such a vacillation can easily be mistaken for a change dictated by organic development and a richly active fantasy. That which on a higher plane may be interpreted as harmony, can, on a lower scale,

betray pedantic monotony. The swift tempo which there shows a superabundance here bears witness to a superficial routine. Eccentricity can spring from the vision of a genius, but it can also be the result of the lust for the sensational and the mania for novelty of a cold-blooded calculator.

Everything therefore depends upon the level. By that, however, we introduce an index from which the scientist turns away in horror. The question of level, of quality, is answered according to the feeling of being convinced, according to the depth of impression, the measure of the sensation of æsthetic pleasure. Depending upon our ability and receptive capacity we reach our conclusion spontaneously and interpret the quality accordingly.

The judgment about the level is subjective and changeable. Every generation decides differently. K. Justi called El



Greco a mannerist. Today we consider this Spaniard a naïve genius. Also the artistic doctrine from which we have taken the distinction between manner and style does not endure forever and may even now be no longer accepted. Now the label "manner" once it has become associated with certain persons and periods continues to stick after the judgment has changed. So it may happen that someone declares: "If El Greco is a mannerist, then we shall honor this title and strive for it, and if he created arbitrarily, very well, we shall contest your theory and derive another from his works." Picasso, to my eye, shows the marks of mannerism in pure cultivation, and does not inspire me even to the extent that I should start upon the attempt to reinterpret such marks, even less to alter the theory of art on his account. Others will feel differently about Picasso.

The concepts of style and manner, as

I have defined them upon the basis of a certain idea of the essence of artistic creation, do not cover two different planes, but should rather be regarded as the upper and lower limits of one plane. One may attempt to give every artist a place in this field by ascertaining to what extent he approaches either manner or style. There is no absolute style or absolute manner, because all spiritual human activity is compounded of impulse and purpose, passion and conscious volition and because no clear line divides the conscious from the unconscious.

There is much talk about stylization as opposed to naturalistic forms. The artful, highly finished work is contrasted with the naturalistic. This antithesis, which seems to contradict our exposition, rests upon errors. The voluntary and subjectively naturalistic form leads to style, since seeing is not a passively mechanical absorption, but an individually

selective action. That which, in the end appears as stylistic expression need not be planned or consciously molded. The antithesis between stylization and naturalistic observation is not rooted in the creative process as is the antithesis between manner and style. We observe that which is close to nature and that which is foreign to it in infinitely many degrees, because every creative master sees in his own way. He who perceives the peculiar and the unusual produces an expression which to the normal eye appears stylized. The mannerist, on the other hand, who, ambitious and experienced, wishes to give more than he has, would like to seem more than he is, despises what he sees, even considers it commonplace and, rather than express it seizes upon that which has already been expressed.

Whether the work looks natural or unnatural—no matter! Let us speak of style as long as we believe the vision, but of

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manner wherever, on account of vanity or a feeling of inferiority, the form is not seen but somehow manufactured and far-fetched.

## DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE



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OUR language is shot through with images. Metaphors creep in everywhere, often hardly recognizable as such. Becoming technical terms, they set themselves up as authority over the person who uses them.

Whoever reflects sees that the expression "development" is supposed to describe a hidden process, but does it only in a rather imperfect manner. Every time a human being develops, something different happens, for which the rigid and dull word always presents the same image.

The metaphor is a shot which does not hit the bull's eye, a substitute, a solution more apparent than real. It is particularly evil because it renders a false satisfaction; it pretends to complete the inter-

pretation, thus putting an end too early to all further consideration. It explains a dim process by showing a similar clear one, which pushes in ahead of the former and conceals it.

To develop means to free something from its bounds, in order that all which has been tied up, compressed and invisible is uncovered, spread out and made visible by this action. This mechanical process is then transferred to organic growth. The blossom develops by the opening of the bud. In this case it is not only a matter of a mere unwinding and emerging, but also of a swelling and growing at the same time.

The art historians look at the growth of an artist in the image of plant growth, exhibiting an understandable predilection for this metaphor. They stand before two creations by one master, which are different from each other. They observe that the master has changed his manner



of expression. Since the art historians, as scientists, are highly interested in the law of cause and effect, they attribute this relationship to observed phenomena. Just as they believe that the blossom contains nothing which could not have been shown in the root, so they see in the later creations of a master the natural consequence of the earlier. They are assisted in this effort by the metaphorical idea of a "development."

Science, in the narrower sense, is calculation. For that reason the historians of art reach so readily for images taken from the realm of mechanics. In this way they escape from the sea of irrational phenomena to the shore of causality.

Personality changes from a chrysalis into a butterfly; it breaks the cocoon; this idea dominates most biographical descriptions. Individuality is looked upon as a being, present from the beginning, which grows and steps forward during the

course of its life until at last it stands before us like a monument, with distinctly expressed forms. The hero in the cradle is the blue-print, so to speak, or the plan for this monument. This current and comfortable schema is prejudicial to observation.

The root of the plant, in itself rather a retort than a primordial origin, is with some justification looked upon as the sufficient cause of the blossom. In the case of the artist, we ought not to look upon his inner make-up as the sufficient cause of his creations but only as the condition.

A personality is by nature of such a disposition that it can produce that, which in fact it does produce. No other personality is able to produce the same things. But that does not mean that a personality is endowed in the cradle with such qualities that it could produce only this and nothing else.

The art scholar and the connoisseur retain the illusion of an inviolable individuality, common to all manifestations of a master. The forms in which this peculiarity manifests itself they see in the several works as the marks of the particular personality. They may find, let us say in six pictures by a given painter, round ears. Such signs may at times render good service in the practice of art expertise, but nobody will value such habits as constant marks of an individuality. We penetrate deeper toward the heart of the creative force if we draw conclusions regarding the nature of the artist's spirit, his mind, and his temperament from the forms he habitually and spontaneously repeats. The farther we advance into the layer of inalienable, inborn gifts, the more general and empty do the concepts become. Near the center we find seriousness, equanimity, conscientiousness—by no means specific and significant qualities.

The unmistakable aspect of personality seems to consist in the fact that these qualities, grouped in this particular way and in these particular doses, in this particular relation to each other, each with this amount of impetus, struggle against each other and combat circumstances operating from without.

A few chess men stand upon the board in an infinite variety of combinations during the game. The game runs its course once and never repeats itself.

The approach of the biographer and the connoisseur is essentially determined by metaphysical ideas about the nature of personality. But the question should not be: Of what stuff is the individual compounded, or what qualities does he include? The following questions turn out more fruitfully; how does an individual react to this or that; how does he behave in this or that situation? What does he select, and what does he refuse? We

should examine the visible forms as a track of his course. Whatever he is or has we consider as taken in during his lifetime, as the deposit of his experiences upon a plate of unalterable quality.

That which the artist creates depends upon the opportunities which fate offers him, as well as upon the demands which his period and the community in which he lives make upon him, and the assistance and impediments which he meets.

Every metaphor works like a poison, apart from its usefulness; the counterpoison is drawn from another metaphor.

Here is another example: An idea well known to art scholars is represented by the picture of "influence." Into such a body of water flows a river of another sort. Starting from the meeting point, the stream is quantitatively a sum, while qualitatively it is the product of a mixture. If the water were yellow in one case

and blue in the other, the resulting stream is green. Misled by this analogy, the art scholar looks upon every meeting of two masters as the cause of a change in style.

Whenever artists meet, it may cause absolutely nothing or a great deal. The meeting is an opportunity, it offers possibilities, but remains without consequences if neither of the two artists is disposed to absorb something. There must be some empty space if anything is supposed to stream in. The receiving artist must have an inclination to be different. In such a case, collision awakes the slumbering desire and helps the dumb intention to become clear and expressive.

The degree of receptivity, the capacity, rests upon individual aptitude, being stronger or weaker according to age and maturity. Defense, resistance against suggestions from the outside, may be self assurance, but it may also be dullness or spiritual inaction. Some artists take in

everything and are always as empty as a sieve. Every encounter becomes for them an episode, an experience. But in most cases the artist is not ready for unreserved reception, but rather for the reception of only certain rather definite suggestions. He looks for models of a definite sort, patterns, that is, which suit him. His vision is limited; most suggestions he does not even see. Rubens was a tyrant in his relation to van Dyck; Titian, in his relation to van Dyck was a liberator.

What one should least expect is that qualities be added indefinitely. The artist gives up something, he rejects something to learn and take on something else; he sacrifices to acquire. Chemical mixing processes remain an insufficient image for the inner process by which an artist digests experiences of nature and art, reproducing them in his own forms and according to his individual nature.

The reader who will compare my dis-

cussions of "influence" and "development" will notice that the warnings given in them paralyze each other.

But the danger of an all too simple, all too mechanical, all too schematic interpretation threatens from both sides. The artist is neither an empty cask nor a vessel full of never lost qualities. His individuality is a dynamic field which attracts and rejects, retains and abandons. It does not consist of the elements which it has seized, but rather endures precisely because it has seized upon these particular elements.

There are few artists, apart from those who died young, who have carried on that belligerent movement which we have shown to consist in "development" and the reception of "influence" right up to their death. Usually the individualization stops somewhere in the course of life, and all that follows is shaped by the law of inertia. The easily recognized marks of



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personality, about which the connoisseur is so keen, appear distinctly at that time, like stones in a river running dry.













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